



Air Quality

Border Challenge:

Clean air in any community can be a challenge, and even more so in border communities where pollutants can travel for several miles across international borders, making them difficult to control with local environmental policies...that is, unless local officials are working hand in hand with officials in the neighboring country.

Air contaminants such as Ozone (O₃) and Particulate Matter (PM) can trigger a variety of health problems and impact the productivity of farmland, an important economic activity in the region. These pollutants can complicate asthma, reduce lung capacity, and increase a person's susceptibility to pneumonia and bronchitis, and even complicate heart and circulatory problems. They also interfere with the ability of plants to produce and store food, making them more susceptible to disease, insects, and harsh weather, or depleting nutrients in the soil and making scarce water sources more acidic.

EPA Accepts the Challenge:

Numerous air quality projects spanning from 1990 to the present range from collaborative international research and air quality monitoring to local air quality planning and international strategy development. Air-monitoring stations were established in El Paso, Laredo, McAllen and Brownsville to assess changes in air quality in the border region in the early 1990's. Later, data from the stations in El Paso were linked to data from Mexican stations, in Ciudad Juarez, in the same air basin, enabling near real-time transfer and reporting of air quality data.

Other examples include the El Paso del Norte Air Quality Study (1996-2000), which evaluated control strategies for carbon monoxide and ozone in the El Paso/Juarez/Doña Ana areas and applied regional air models. To address the problem of increasing haze at Big Bend National Park, a study called "BRAVO" was conducted in 1999, followed by intense data analysis and modeling in 2000-2004. A final report, focusing on source types contributing to the haze, will be released in September 2004

